

Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program

2LT Maynard C. Freemole Bridge – Hot Springs, SD

November 26, 2019



2nd Lt. Maynard C. Freemole

On November 26, 2019, South Dakota launched the Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program. The program will dedicate state bridges to South Dakotans who died while in active service, making the ultimate sacrifice.

The first bridge dedicated is on US 38/North River Street is dedicated to Second Lt. Maynard C. Freemole.

Maynard C. Freemole grew up in South Dakota. He quit high school after the 10th grade and on February 10th, 1941, at the age of 17, he enlisted in the United States Army.

When America joined the war, Freemole applied for pilot training and was sent to Maxwell Field in Alabama.

Not having completed high school put Maynard at a severe disadvantage during pilot training. However, Maynard bore down, beat the odds, and graduated from twin engine advanced school in February 1943. Freemole did his B-17 transition training at different locations in the States.

In September 1943, Freemole arrived at the 96th Bomb Group's base at Snetterton Heath and was assigned to the 337th Squadron.

On December 16, over 500 B-17s and B-24s from various bomb groups based all over the part of England known as East Anglia, headed for Germany. By two o'clock in the afternoon, they had hit their assigned objective. Now, under constant attack by enemy fighters, the beleaguered bombers were battling their way back towards the North Sea and home.

Near the Dutch coast, two B-17s from the 96th Bomb Group's 337th Squadron were shot from the sky. Lt. Edwin Smith's plane exploded in mid-air before anyone could bail out. Lt. Freemole's plane went down in flames. There were no survivors.

The demise of the two bombers came so suddenly and simultaneously that they crashed very close to one another near the tiny village of Poppenwier. The remains of the ten airmen of the Smith crew and the ten from Freemole crew were buried in common graves in the village cemetery.

Maynard Freemole was three months shy of his 21st birthday.

In November of 1949, Lt. Freemole's remains and those of several of his crew were returned to the United States. They are buried in a common grave at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

